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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 13 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Majoor	(Netherlands)
later:	Mr. Margarian (Vice-Chairman)	(Armenia)
later:	Mr. Majoor (Chairman)	(Netherlands)

Contents

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women

(a) Advancement of women

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women (A/63/38, A/63/222 and A/63/215)

(a) Advancement of women (A/63/214, A/63/216,A/63/364 and A/63/205)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/63/217)

1. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) said that the current confluence of economic and political crises, coupled with natural disasters and global warming, would have a negative effect on realization of the goals of the 2005 World Summit, including the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The world was also however going through a period of political, economic and social transitions that required innovative and, most importantly, collaborative action. Democratic reform was increasingly taking root. Improved governance and economic management in many developing countries had created an enabling environment for the mobilization of resources, both domestic and external. Great progress had been made in eliminating poverty and hunger and effective collaborative strategies had been deployed to combat malaria and HIV/AIDS. Progress in furthering the African green revolution, improved obstetric care, better schooling for girls, the use of information and communications technologies to empower women, government and private sector partnerships and the increasingly active role played by civil society had saved millions of lives and made the world safer and more prosperous.

2. The emphasis placed on mutual accountability had strengthened international cooperation. In that same spirit of cooperation and accountability, developing countries must implement sound domestic policies to achieve their development goals, donors must meet their commitments to support the developing countries, and the United Nations system and civil society must likewise promote development, including with regard to women. In a globalized and ever more interdependent world, collective action was more necessary than ever. There must be a shift in thinking aimed at making use of the untapped resources of more than half the world's population who were excluded from international development and security, by making it unthinkable not to have women fully involved at every stage of the development and peace process.

3. The international community needed improved mechanisms to deal with crises. Member States had made multi-billion dollar interventions to assist their financial systems; surely global economic and social problems demanded no less attention. Such coordinated action would benefit both developed and developing countries. The United Nations provided a framework for worldwide coordination and had been at the forefront of recent global efforts to meet challenges and strengthen mutual accountability, collective action and inclusiveness.

4. The strong sense of commitment shown at the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular the partnership event on gender equality and empowerment of women: a prerequisite for achieving all Millennium Development Goals by 2015, held on 25 September 2008, was encouraging, and showed that with commitment, a shared vision and strong partnerships, obstacles could be overcome. She expressed concern however that despite progress made, more than 55 per cent of children not attending school were girls, almost two thirds of women in the developing world worked as unpaid family workers and most educated and qualified women remained in low status jobs and faced barriers to promotion. The high-level review of the Millennium Development Goals seemed to have put less emphasis on Goal 3, promote gender equality and empower women, and she called for greater focus on that goal, which was not only valuable in its own right, but also a key to achieving the others.

5. At the country level, policy initiatives for gender equality and the empowerment of women often floundered for lack of resources. If gender equality and women's empowerment were truly considered vital to development, more attention and resources must be devoted to them. The upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus should make that clear. Notwithstanding the increased demand for resources to implement the commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits, the agreed conclusions on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women of the Commission on the

Status of Women (E/CN.6/2008/L.8) provided guidance on innovative ways to strengthen financing for gender issues. The current financial crisis must not be allowed to derail the work to achieve the MDGs, including gender equality.

6. The year 2008 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Much remained to be done to make universal and indivisible rights a reality for all women and men, and no country could claim that it had eliminated discrimination against women. The message of the Universal Declaration must be carried to every region of the world in order to make women's rights a reality. To that end, the international community must support the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

7. Violence against women, one of the most pervasive and extreme violations of human rights, was currently high on the international agenda. She welcomed the launch of the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign in February 2008 at the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Secretary-General had called on States to enact legislation to eliminate violence against women, and she therefore welcomed the adoption by the Republic of San Marino of Act No. 97 on prevention and elimination of violence against women and gender violence, and the declaration by the Government of Brazil of 6 December as the National Day to Eliminate Violence against Women and its decision to host a global symposium on engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality.

8. Violence against women nevertheless continued unabated, occurring in all countries at all stages of development. Women and girls were disproportionately affected by conflict and emergency situations and faced a high risk of sexual violence. The violence suffered by women and girls during conflict situations established patterns of violence that impeded recovery for many years. Most victims of human trafficking were women. Violence against women accelerated the spread of HIV/AIDS. More must therefore be done by all stakeholders to end violence against women, and she urged Member States to support the Secretary-General's campaign.

9. Women were slowly gaining ground in political and public life and the private sector. The global proportion of women parliamentarians had reached 18 per cent; in Rwanda women parliamentarians were a majority, as was the case in Sweden, Finland and Argentina. The percentage of States having women parliamentarians had increased from 25 per cent in 1999 to 35 per cent currently. Women were nevertheless largely absent from the highest levels of government: there were only 11 women heads of State; only 16 per cent of cabinet members were women; only three countries, Finland, Norway and Grenada, exceeded the 50/50 goal for representation of men and women.

10. Within the Organization, progress in improving the representation of women at professional and policymaking levels had been slower than expected: the percentage of women in Professional and higher posts was 38.4 per cent, an improvement of only 3 per cent in nearly 10 years; the percentage of women in the Secretariat had increased from 37.4 to only 37.6 between July 2006 and June 2008. Accordingly, the Secretary-General was taking steps to rectify those deficiencies by establishing mechanisms at the senior management level and including gender indicators in performance appraisals for managers.

11. Over the past year, the Organization had taken steps to strengthen gender mainstreaming. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, representing more than thirty entities, continued to be at the heart of concerted United Nations action on gender issues. The Network had adopted draft standards for a system-wide gender policy and United Nations country team performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Network had also collaborated closely with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and its Development Assistance Committee through the DAC Network on Gender Equality. At the most recent workshop held in Paris in January 2008, the two Networks had discussed the importance of coordination among bilateral and multilateral agencies aimed at strengthening gender equality efforts in partner countries.

12. She recalled that during the consultative follow-up process by the General Assembly on system-wide coherence, delegates had received information on gender equality and women's empowerment as well as on four institutional options to strengthen United Nations efforts in that regard, prepared following intensive inter-agency collaboration and in broad consultation with civil society. As a result, General

Assembly resolution 62/277 requested the Secretary-General to prepare a review of those options. The review would be guided by the views of Member States as expressed during the informal consultations, with a particular focus on the "composite entity" option.

13. The current session of the Assembly must find innovative ways to promote more rapid, effective and coordinated action to advance the status of the world's women, in keeping with the commitments made at Beijing and the 2005 World Summit. She pledged the full cooperation of her Office, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality for those efforts and looked forward to the guidance of delegations.

14. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)) said that the momentum for action on violence against women had accelerated significantly since the call to action by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/143. That was visible from the inputs received for the three relevant reports currently before the Committee. The report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) was based on contributions from 44 States, with a further 10 contributions having been received after the completion of the report. The information received confirmed the need for a comprehensive approach, anchored in a strong national framework for the promotion of gender equality. The report underscored the need for appropriate comprehensive legislation, including prevention measures, and highlighted the need for national action plans, adequate resources, leadership at the highest levels and systematic evaluation of the effect of measures adopted.

15. Several intergovernmental bodies had responded to the invitation from the Secretary-General to discuss the question of violence against women within their respective mandates or would do so. The Statistical Commission, for example, was working on indicators on violence against women, and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had initiated a review of its Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women. An update on United Nations system activities to eliminate violence against women had been submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2008, and a current update was available in the Committee room. Further information would be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2009.

16. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls (A/63/215), she said that 40 contributions had been made, with a further 15 received after completion of the report. Member States had taken extensive measures to prevent trafficking in women and girls. The thematic debate on human trafficking held by the General Assembly on 3 June 2008 had generated a fresh impetus among Member States and stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and implement international agreements. United Nations entities had stepped up their efforts and enhanced coordination and partnerships. The report called for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive approach to trafficking in women and girls.

17. The report of the Secretary-General on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations (A/63/216) had received inputs from 29 States and 16 United Nations system entities, with eight contributions received after its completion. The report recalled the existing international legal and policy framework for the elimination of sexual violence and summarized measures in place at the national level. United Nations entities had likewise highlighted their efforts to address the problem of rape. The report concluded that the elimination of rape and sexual violence formed part of the holistic approach taken by States to addressing violence against women.

18. The Division for the Advancement of Women continued to expand its efforts to eliminate violence against women as part of its contribution to the Secretary-General's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women. It was building the database on violence against women mandated by General Assembly resolution 61/143 and had circulated an information questionnaire, soon to be available in all official languages, to Member States; a brochure on the database had likewise been distributed to delegations. The database would be launched at the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2009. In addition, the first issue of the newsletter *Words to action*, on violence against women, had been issued. The newsletter would become a quarterly electronic publication. The Division had also expanded its webpage on violence against women.

19. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/63/217), she said that the report showed that gender perspectives were most prominent in the fields of human rights and less so with regard to legal, economic and political issues. Considerable progress had nevertheless been made in the areas of women and development and the elimination of violence against women.

20. More systematic attention to gender issues was needed by the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, only three of which, in addition to the Commission on the Status of Women, had incorporated gender equality perspectives in their outcomes. Increased collaboration with the Commission would accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The report contained a number of recommendations on increasing systematic attention to the gender dimensions of all issues and emphasized the important role of the Commission on the Status of Women in providing effective support to Member States at the national level.

21. She drew the Committee's attention to the commemoration of the first International Day of Rural Women on 15 October 2008, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/136, which would see the launch of a new publication, *Women 2000 and beyond: rural women in a changing world: opportunities and challenges*. The commemoration would also be held the day before World Food Day, which would focus on food security and the challenges of climate change and diversity.

22. The General Assembly played a critical role in promoting gender issues in policy development and implementation at the national level, and the Third Committee continued to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality. The other Main Committees should follow that example in order to ensure full and effective implementation of the outcomes of the Beijing Conference and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Division for the Advancement of Women stood ready to assist Member States to that end.

23. **Ms. Alberdi** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the Fund's work was guided by four-year strategic plans. The report on the activities of UNIFEM (A/63/205) reviewed the results achieved in the context of its multi-year funding framework 2004-2007. It focused on the four goal areas of the plan: reducing feminized poverty and exclusion; promoting gender equality in democratic governance and post-conflict reconstruction; ending violence against women; and halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

24. Member States were now midway to the 2015 target for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and midway between the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The extent of actions and resources mobilized to achieve gender equality were a key indicator of accountability for carrying out commitments made.

25. In 2007, UNIFEM began advocating the use of gender-responsive budgeting to track internal and external resource flows within the aid effectiveness agenda and was partnering with the European Commission to promote the use of gender-responsive budgeting as a tool to build greater accountability for achieving results in terms of gender equality and development.

26. A hallmark of progress in promoting institutional accountability was that in 2008, many more mainstream institutions had placed gender equality and women's rights higher on their action agendas. One example was the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) to end sexual violence in conflict zones. The Council now had a clear mandate to intervene to prevent sexual violence and had also requested a comprehensive report from the Secretary-General on implementation and strategies for improving information flow to the Council.

27. On behalf of the United Nations system, UNIFEM managed the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to End Violence against Women. General Assembly resolutions 61/143 and 62/133 on violence against women had called for greater attention and resources for the Trust Fund. Contributions to it had quadrupled between 2006 and 2008, enabling it to increase the size of grants to Governments and civil society organizations, as well as to support stronger

collaboration between national partners and United Nations country teams in efforts to address violence against women.

28. In 2007, UNIFEM had initiated a cross-regional programme to promote gender equality in the financing for development and aid effectiveness debates. Regional consultations on gender equality and aid effectiveness had generated a broader knowledge base on gender equality and aid effectiveness. The increasing shift to programme-based approaches within the aid effectiveness agenda provided new mechanisms to support gender equality priorities, such as the "basket fund on gender and governance" in Kenya.

29. In the coming months, UNIFEM would continue to support gender equality advocates in government, civil society and United Nations partner organizations to enhance implementation and accountability for gender equality commitments in the context of financing for development, building on the outcome of the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which requested the United Nations to provide capacity-building to Governments and civil society; the high-level event on the MDGs and the agreed conclusions of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. As stated in the agreed conclusions, investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth, and increasing women's economic empowerment was central to achieving the MDGs.

30. In support of the Secretary-General's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women, UNIFEM was mobilizing to have ending violence against women recognized as an essential part of progress on the MDGs. As an expression of support for that campaign, the Fund would present to the Secretary-General on 25 November, the International Day against Violence against Women, the signatures collected through its own campaign Say No to Violence against Women.

31. As the United Nations intensified its efforts to bring countries together to achieve the MDGs, greater coherence and coordination was needed to enable it to continue to provide holistic and coordinated support to countries to deliver on national priorities for development and gender equality. Member States had welcomed the Deputy Secretary-General's paper of 23 July 2008 on institutional options to strengthen work on gender equality and women's empowerment and had requested the Secretary-General to provide a detailed modalities paper, focusing in particular on the "composite entity" option.

32. **Ms. Berrah** (Algeria) drew the attention of the Committee to paragraph 34 of document A/63/214, which contained unacceptable distortions of her country's report to the Secretariat on its implementation of resolution 61/143. The Secretariat had substituted the words "women victims of violence in armed conflict" for the words used by Algeria "women victims of terrorist violence". Algeria's words "all local officials" ("ensemble de responsables locaux" in the original French) had been replaced by the term "police officers" ("policiers"). Algeria had informed the Secretariat that it should issue a corrigendum to correct those distortions or provide an explanation of its position. She asked for her comments to be reflected in the summary record of the meeting.

33. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) wondered why progress in improving the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations Secretariat was so slow, and how the obstacles could be overcome. He also requested information about the percentage of women from developing countries that were represented and suggested that the figure should be included in future reports by the Secretary-General.

34. His delegation also wished to know why the reports of the Secretary-General made no reference to "women under foreign occupation" although such references were included in many resolutions on the subject of violence against women. Lastly, he encouraged States to support UNIFEM and emphasized the need to increase activities for the advancement and empowerment of women.

35. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) wished to hear the Assistant Secretary-General's views concerning the slow progress in achieving a 50/50 gender balance among the staff of the United Nations Secretariat. Her delegation expressed appreciation for the newsletter on violence against women produced by the Division for the Advancement of Women and hoped that the initiative would be continued. She also asked what specific progress had been made with the Secretary-General's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women .

36. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of

efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) were addressed only to Member States, whereas they should also be addressed to occupying authorities. Paragraph 75 of the report emphasized the need to end impunity and intensify efforts to study the impact of rules and legislation. She noted that the State of Israel did not provide any statistics on the women in the occupied territories.

37. The international community had certain responsibilities under international humanitarian law, either to urge States to implement their obligations or to provide support for persons living under foreign occupation. More information should be provided on the current and future planned activities of United Nations specialized agencies for women in the occupied territories. She was referring not only to the situation in Palestine but also to the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. At the beginning of 2009, her country would be launching a campaign against violence against women and Ms. Mayanja was invited to participate.

38. **Mr. Zeidan** (Observer for Palestine) noted that the Secretary-General's report on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) made no mention of women living under foreign occupation. In the occupied Arab territory, women aged 41 or younger had spent their entire lives under occupation and had been subjected to violence, house demolitions, humiliation at checkpoints, imprisonment and the destruction of agricultural land. He hoped that the issue would be addressed in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/143.

39. **Mr. Suárez** (Colombia) said that his delegation wished to stress the importance of ensuring system-wide coherence and the reform of the gender architecture within the United Nations system. A report requested from the Secretary-General on personnel, governance structures, specific functions and relations with the Commission on the Status of Women; such information was essential so that an informed choice could be made. A UNICEF report on the evaluation of gender policy implementation had identified specific shortcomings in gender mainstreaming in that agency. He asked how international agencies could ensure that their action took those findings into account.

40. **Mr. Fieschi** (France) said that, according to recent pilot studies carried out in the European Union, violence against women had an impact in economic terms in addition to its human cost. He asked what action could be taken to draw attention to that dimension of the issue and to help measure the economic impact of violence against women.

41. **Ms. Mayanja** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), responding to the questions asked said that there was still no systematic way to account for the gender imbalance within the United Nations system, or for the Organization's difficulties in retaining female staff. One possible cause was that in some host countries, it was difficult for spouses of staff to gain the right to work. The Organization was currently negotiating to improve the situation.

42. Another factor was the fact that Member States often predominantly put forward male candidates. The Secretary-General now insisted that any shortlist for D-2 posts should include at least one woman. The problem became more acute at the higher levels, and it was essential to ensure that vacancies were publicized outside the Organization. There were currently no statistics stating what percentage of United Nations staff were women from developing countries. However, the WomenWatch website listed the nationalities of female staff members. She hoped that it would be possible to include relevant statistics in the next report on the topic.

43. United Nations campaigns on violence against women were organized partly at the level of individual agencies and partly at the system-wide level. The latter had been endorsed by the High-level Committee on Programmes, and details would be issued soon. On 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women would be marked by an international youth panel discussion and a concert. Lastly, consultations between United Nations agencies were taking place, and a strategy and programme had been formulated. All of the concerned agencies were incorporating gender perspectives into their work, often as a key priority.

44. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)) said that she had taken note of the issue raised by the representative of Algeria and would report back on it. Responding to the comments made by the representatives of the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic and by the Observer for Palestine, she said that the Secretary-General's report

on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) focused only on the information provided by 44 Member States. The Secretary-General's report on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations (A/63/216), was based only on the contributions of 29 Member States and 16 United Nations agencies.

45. The newsletter on violence against women produced by the Division would continue to appear on a quarterly basis. The UNICEF report on the evaluation of gender policy implementation contained some important findings, which were being disseminated. The Division for the Advancement of Women regularly contributed to such evaluations.

46. The report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/63/214) provided valuable information on the economic cost of the problem. She hoped that Member States would add relevant information to the Division's database and that United Nations agencies would make use of such data in their work. The topic could also be discussed in newsletters, and raised in reports of the Secretary-General and in the work of the Task Force on Violence against Women.

47. **Ms. Alberdi** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that UNIFEM was increasingly active alongside local partners both in the Syrian Arab Republic and in the occupied Arab territory. With funding from the Government of Italy, it was assisting women who had been the victims of violence. UNIFEM continued to support economic programmes helping women in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It was cooperating with the Coalition of Women for Peace, a group of Israeli, Palestinian and international women committed to peace on the basis of the two-State solution.

48. Responding to the question raised by the representative of Colombia, she said that the United Nations was working to create a new agency focused on gender, with greater resources and with opportunities to address decision-making bodies within the Organization. In response to the question asked by the representative of France, she said that it was important to back words with deeds and provide greater resources to combat violence against women. The Trust Fund to End Violence against Women now contained some $20 million for 2009, but the objective was to raise $100 million. France, which currently held the Presidency of the European Union, had the opportunity to convey that concern to the States members of the European Union.

49. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) noted that the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women had stated that the Secretary-General's report (A/63/214) contained only responses from Member States. However, it was important that requests for information should also be sent to occupying Powers. With regard to the points made by the Executive Director of UNIFEM, she wished to clarify that her question referred not to United Nations activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, but to activities in the occupied Syrian Golan.

50. **Ms. Šimonović** (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that her Committee had been productive over the previous year, partly as a result of the extended meeting time granted it by the General Assembly. It had considered the reports of 16 States parties and continued to examine ways to streamline the process. The Committee had also sought to harmonize working methods and had adopted treaty-specific reporting guidelines for States parties. A follow-up procedure had also been adopted, in order to ensure that the Committee's concluding observations were more accessible, concrete and implementable. A delegation from the Committee had conducted a follow-up visit to Luxembourg, the first of its kind. It was hoped that other States parties would follow that country's example.

51. The Committee had also focused on non-reporting States parties. It extended a special invitation to States parties with long overdue initial and periodic reports to submit them by a specific date, failing which it would consider implementation in the State party concerned in advance of the report. States that had been invited to submit a report had thus far done so. The Committee would continue to explore ways of encouraging States to submit reports, notably by suggesting that they seek technical assistance from the appropriate United Nations bodies.

52. The Committee had also sought to expand the range of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Convention, a task that was primarily, but not solely, the responsibility of States parties. The

Committee had long emphasized the role of non-governmental organizations in that process. It now also stressed the role of national human rights institutions and parliamentarians in that regard.

53. Until recently, the Committee's work had been supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women. In a recent change, the body now responsible for providing support for the work of the Committee was the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. That meant that the Committee now held a central place in the treaty-based and intergovernmental framework for human rights. At the same time, the Committee maintained its close ties with the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund.

54. With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose sixtieth anniversary was now being observed, and subsequent instruments, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted 15 years earlier, the rights of women and girls had been integrated into human rights as a whole. Violence against women was now viewed as a human rights issue rather than as a family or private matter.

55. While universal ratification of the Convention had not been achieved, the goal was in sight, and significant progress had been achieved in respect of removing reservations to the Convention. Nonetheless, challenges remained, the primary one being discrimination and violence against women based on patriarchal attitudes. That was apparent to the Committee from the fact that discriminatory laws, customs and practices persisted in States parties from one reporting round to the next. The Convention had encouraged significant changes on the ground and transformed lives, but its lack of visibility and resource constraints meant that its potential had not yet been fully exploited.

56. *Mr. Margarian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

57. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that progress towards Millenium Development Goal 3, promoting gender equality and empowering women, had been insufficient. Due to the global economic crisis, the feminization of poverty was growing. Some female-headed households spent more than half of their income on food. In that connection, a development-oriented result of the current Doha Development Round negotiations, food security, agricultural productivity and cancellation of foreign debt would be critical to reduce persistent poverty and hunger in developing countries.

58. There had not been sufficient movement towards increasing access to quality education, although much had been done to achieve universal primary education and eliminate illiteracy. Upgrading women's skills through education and training would provide them with greater opportunities to participate in the economy and improve the welfare of their families.

59. The Group of 77 and China wished to receive information on the activities undertaken by the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign, launched in February, 2008. The persistence of conflicts in many parts of the world was an obstacle to the elimination of violence against women, and attention must be paid to the plight of women living under foreign occupation. Where gross violations were committed against women, the perpetrators must be prosecuted. There must be no impunity.

60. With regard to the status of women within the United Nations system, it was cause for great concern that the official report of the Secretary-General on the subject had not been published within the mandated time frame. Progress towards gender parity within the United Nations was not satisfactory. In 2007, the number of women in the Professional and higher categories had increased by less than one percentage point. As at the end of 2007, only 2 of 31 United Nations entities had achieved gender balance. With the exception of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, women represented only 23 per cent of the members of the seven human rights treaty bodies. Overall, the advances in that area were extremely discouraging.

61. The health-related Millenium Development Goals posed a daunting challenge. In many developing countries, little to no headway had been made in reducing maternal mortality rates. The most recent estimates indicated that over half a million women died each year from treatable and preventable complications

during pregnancy and childbirth, such as obstetric fistula.

62. It was estimated that some $13 billion was required annually to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. Those objectives would require a reallocation of resources and additional, predictable sources of financing. Greater commitment was required to achieve the Millenium Development Goals. The global economic, energy, food and climate crises, weak support from international financial institutions and the continuous decline in official development assistance (ODA) were some of the obstacles that developing countries encountered in their attempts to meet the Goals.

63. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that in order to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to promote gender equality, a new gender entity should be created, to be placed under the direction of an Under-Secretary-General, for the purpose of bringing together the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture and playing a technical, policy-setting and programmatic role. Women were an asset to society and were at the heart of development. Without them, no sustainable development was possible. They also played a major role in peacebuilding. Therefore, the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and 1820 (2008) on acts of sexual violence against civilians in armed conflicts should be strengthened.

64. Gender equality was central to democracy, as a recent conference promoted by the European Commissioner for External Relations had concluded. As a result of that conference, over 40 prominent women leaders from around the world had called upon the Secretary-General to convene a ministerial conference in 2010 on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The European Union was working on a set of conclusions on indicators on women in armed conflict, which was one of the priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. That set of indicators followed a series of others, already adopted, on violence against women, women and health and other issues.

65. The European Union attached great importance to the universalization and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and called on all States parties to withdraw all reservations contrary to the principles of the Convention. At the United Nations, the European Union actively supported many resolutions and actions for the universal recognition of women's rights and had supported resolutions presented by its member States to further combat violence against women. General Assembly resolution 61/143, entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women", was a major development in that respect.

66. The European Union placed women's rights at the core of its foreign policy both politically and financially. Within the European Union, the still inadequate representation of women and the difficulties faced by women in society, economic life and the workplace were addressed by many policies and programmes. The European Consensus on Development, adopted in 2005, contained five principles of development cooperation, supported by all of the Union's member States. The Consensus highlighted the importance of gender equality in the context of aid modalities. The European Union stressed that gender equality could not be achieved without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and reaffirmed that expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services was essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millenium Development Goals.

67. *Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), resumed the Chair.*

68. **Mr. Mahiga** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that on 28 August 2008, the heads of State of the Community had signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which consolidated previous commitments on gender equality into one regional instrument. The signing of the Protocol had been the culmination of a long process in which the Governments of SADC States members and civil society had learned important lessons regarding the need for adequate funding; the involvement of multiple

stakeholders; partnerships between civil society, the media and the private sector, and the Government; broad-based lobbying at the national level; and technical assistance and guidance on advocacy, lobbying and policy development. All States members of the Community had ratified the Addendum to the Declaration on Gender and Development on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children.

69. The Community was encouraged by the progress made in the General Assembly's discussions on a gender architecture within the United Nations system. The recent high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals had provided an opportunity to review progress in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women. It was a matter of great concern that the international community was not on track with regard to the Goal relating to maternal health. SADC supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/63/222) and wished to acknowledge the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in creating awareness and stepping up action to address the problem.

70. The Community also wished to acknowledge the work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), particularly in raising awareness of the issue of trafficking in women and girls and violence against women. SADC members needed increased assistance in the collection of reliable data on the scope and nature of such trafficking and called for increased funding to UNIFEM to enable it to carry out its mandate more efficiently. SADC also reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

71. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that CARICOM delegations were concerned at the lack of progress on gender equality. Noting that the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women had focused on the issue of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, he stressed the urgency of integrating a gender perspective into national budgeting and, in that regard, called attention to the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

72. That Conference would provide an opportunity to accord greater attention to the role of women in development as well as to address existing gaps in financing. Special attention should be paid to the need to promote respect for labour standards, underscore the need for greater social responsibility and gender-sensitivity on the part of the business sector, and ensure that additional social expenditures made possible as a result of debt reduction took into account the gender perspective and the mainstreaming of gender into development policies.

73. Women constituted a significant proportion of migrant workers and continued to be vulnerable to many forms of discrimination. CARICOM viewed the forthcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development, to be held in the Philippines, as an important opportunity to draw attention to the gender dimensions of international migration.

74. At the regional level, priority attention was focused on issues such as the elimination of poverty, especially among women, and gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS. Countries of the region had also enacted legislation focusing on the establishment of mechanisms to end and redress violence against women. Two CARICOM States had already attained the agreed benchmarks in regard to the full and active participation of women in public life and decision-making, and in five others the Speaker of the House was female. The general thrust was to increase the participation of women in governmental bodies throughout the region.

75. **Ms. Stewart** (Canada), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that, in the context of system-wide coherence, the international community had a chance to shape a renewed United Nations that was properly equipped to support Member States in realizing women's rights and equality commitments. The new United Nations gender equality architecture must, first and foremost, enhance performance at country level to better support national ownership and leadership. It should strengthen policy coherence in the United Nations system and ensure adequate authority in the Organization's leadership to strengthen integration and focus attention on gender issues.

76. **Mr. Ochoa** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the countries belonging to the Rio Group had made progress towards ensuring that their legislative and normative frameworks promoted gender equality and women's empowerment. The Group had welcomed General Assembly resolution 62/277 on system-wide coherence and looked forward to the detailed modalities paper requested in that resolution with a view to facilitating substantive action by the General Assembly during the sixty-third session.

77. The countries belonging to the Rio Group had been working to raise awareness regarding the need to prevent violence against women and protect them from the many forms of discrimination to which they were subjected. In particular, they were carrying out plans to protect women's sexual and reproductive rights, combat the feminization of HIV/AIDS and enhance women's access to the court system. They welcomed the special attention being given in different regions of the world to preventing violence against migrant women and encouraged all States to adopt plans to address that issue.

78. The Rio Group looked forward to the implementation of the recommendations made by the UNIFEM Consultative Committee at its forty-eighth session and welcomed the launching of the Fund's report Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009. It also noted with satisfaction the achievements of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and urged the Secretary-General to continue strengthening the Institute.

79. The Rio Group wished to announce the recent launching of regional efforts under the Deliver Now for Women + Children Campaign, which was aimed at achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 in the Latin American region. It also welcomed the adoption of the first hemispheric report on recommendations for implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the Belem do Pará Convention.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.